

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Gettysburg School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

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Dates of On Site Visit: January 24th, 2006

Date of Report: February 3, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Private school information
- Local Education Association (LEA) flow through funds request information
- Information on home school students

- Comprehensive plan
- Comprehensive system of personnel development plan
- District annual needs assessment
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT): referral vs. non referral information
- Needs assessment information (such as personnel, facilities, etc)
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Screening
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district has established and effectively implemented an ongoing child find system to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities, age's birth through 21 years who may need special education. The district has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place. Through this self-evaluation process, the district has identified some ineffective practices in the past, but has taken steps to correct those practices.

Graduation information is reported to the Department of Education as required. Only one student with disabilities did not graduate from the district during the 2001 – 2003 period. District policy addresses the requirements for suspension/expulsion.

Special Education personnel utilize outside workshops provided by various agencies to gain knowledge into instructional strategies applicable to the needs of district students. District professional development has focused on reading strategies and brain based research to assist educators to develop appropriate curriculum for all students.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded there is little evidence available to indicate the district has provided sufficient levels of staff professional development devoted solely to the areas of special needs students.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement under general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age
- Age at referral
- Student progress data
- Personnel development information
- Number of referrals that do not result in evaluation
- District records of release to outside agencies
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that the school district provides a FAPE to all eligible children with disabilities. The district's comprehensive plan contains suspension/expulsion procedures should the need arise.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Prior notice
- Telephone log
- Evaluation report
- Exit and re-entry into special education
- Number of placement committee overrides
- Surveys
- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive plan
- Initial referral log
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- List of tests currently used in the district (date of publication)

- List of out of district testing services used by the district
- List of languages represented in the district (includes sign language and Braille)
- List of interpreters/signers used in the district
- Personnel with designated certification
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to children as part of an evaluation or re-evaluation. Evaluation or re-evaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. The district ensures the proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. Re-evaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to consistently document parent input into the evaluation process. Functional assessment needs to consistently occur during initial and reevaluation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Functional assessment was consistently conducted in all files reviewed.

Out of compliance

ARSD24:05:25:04.02. Determination of needed evaluation data. As part of an initial evaluation, if appropriate, the individual education program team required by § 24:05:27:01.01 and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine whether the child has a disability, and determine whether the child needs special education and related services, as appropriate, shall:

- (1) Review existing evaluation data on the child, including
 - a. Evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child;
 - b. Current classroom-based assessments and observations; and
 - c. Observations by teachers and related services providers; and
- (2) Based on the above review and input from the student's parents, identify what additional data, if any, are needed to determine:
 - a. Whether the student has a particular category of disability as described in this article;
 - b. The present levels of performance and educational needs of the student; and
 - c. Whether the student needs special education and related services.

Though interview and a review of student records, parents input into evaluation was not documented for five students at the elementary level.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Needs assessment information
- Public awareness information
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
- Review of access logs
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Parents are fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent was sought. The district has not needed to utilize the surrogate parent procedure, however a policy is in place should the need arise.

The district has provided parents with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records pertaining to the services provided for their child. District policy and procedures are in place for responding to complaint and due process actions.

Need Improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to review its procedures on the destruction of records.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent. Written notice which meets the requirements of § 24:05:30:05 must be given to the parents five days before the district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. The five-day notice requirement may be waived by the parents. If the notice described in this section relates to an action proposed by the district that also requires parental consent, the district may give notice at the same time it requests parent consent. Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related service.

Parent consent was received by the district to administer specific evaluations as listed on the individual prior notice. In a review of student records, the monitoring team noted that evaluations were not administered in all of the areas for which consent was received. For example, the prior notice for one student stated that the areas of visual motor and fine motor would be evaluate; there was no evidence evaluations were conducted in these areas. For another student, consent was received to conduct an adaptive behavior evaluation; there was no evidence evaluation was conducted in this area.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher file reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel development information
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. The IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. The IEP contains all required content and transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities. The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and is in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to make a stronger effort to invite agency representatives to transition meetings. The district needs to consistently ensure students are invited to IEP meetings where transition services will be discussed and that they understand the process.

The district needs to address the behavioral needs of students through the development of behavior programs. Justifications for placement statements need to consistently meet requirements. Student progress needs to be reported toward each annual goal.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

The district has consistently invited agency representative and the student to meetings where transition services will be discussed. Progress toward the annual goals was documented in the IEP and copies are provided to parents with report cards.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees the district needs to address the behavioral needs of student through the IEP process. Justification for placement statements needs to consistently explain why the student cannot participate in the general education program with their non-disabled peers.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include:

- (2) A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to:
 - (a) Meet the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum; and
 - (b) Meet each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability;

ARSD 24:05:24.01:01. Students with disabilities defined. Students with disabilities are students evaluated in accordance with chapter 24:05:25 as having autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairments, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairments including blindness, which adversely affects educational performance, and who, because of those disabilities, need special education or special education and related services. If it is determined through an appropriate evaluation, under chapter 24:05:25, that a student has one of the disabilities identified in this chapter, but only needs a related service and not special education, the student is not a student with a disability under this article. If, consistent with this chapter, the related service required by the student is considered special education, the student is a student with a disability under this article.

Through a review of three student records the monitoring team identified the following issues:

1. A student was identified as other health impaired on child count due to an attention deficit disorder. The student's IEP did not contain behavior goals designed to address the educational needs due to the disability. The only goal in the IEP was to complete job forms.
2. Another student identified as other health impaired due to attention deficit disorder had a learning disability in written expression and oral expression. The only goal in the IEP was to "say 6 letter words..."

3. The only goal in the IEP for a student identified as having an orthopedic impairment was “to improve gait ability for running, walking and recreation, sports, and work activities as determined by the physical therapist throughout the year.”

It was also noted by the team that other IEPs included some goals developed for a subject areas (i.e. science) taught by the special education teacher as opposed to the skill area affected by the disability.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Parent, Student, General educator surveys
- General curriculum information
- Age at Placement
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that the district ensures that all children receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded information regarding curriculum modifications and creative instructional approaches to instruction is needed by district staff.

Validation Results

Meets requirement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.